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write a coherent paragraph on a given subject with the material carefully pre-digested for her use. She has not only forgotten how to put words together properly, she has never learned how to put thoughts together, even the thoughts of other people!

Here is where the colleges do make a mistake, I think, in regard to teaching English: they put theme-writing in the first year, and logic in the third or fourth. The girls should be drilled in logic every day for a year before they are allowed to put pen to paper in English 1. That will at least help them to reproduce others' ideas in some sort of coherent form. Of course it won't make them writers of good English—it is too late for that.

Another result of our present system is that it turns out such commonplace, uninteresting young men and women; only the rarely fit survive, and they have less power than they should. I once heard a distinguished editor say that a would-be writer with any originality had better not go to college. But the lower schools are far more dangerous because they influence us at a more impressionable age.

Is memorizing facts education? And if it is, what possible connection is there between being educated and writing good English?

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THE DEADLY GRIP OF TRADITION

Perhaps our pupils are still taught a fixed form for compositions—introduction, body, and conclusion—because unsuspecting old Aristotle tried to illustrate what he had in mind about dramatic composition by employing the terms that we translate “beginning,” “middle,” and “end.” Or perhaps this mechanical makeshift for analysis is still given them because formal rhetoric in modern guise came to us largely from clerical teachers, used to the cut-and-dry methods of sermon composition as practiced almost universally until outside influences reacted on the pulpit and forced a more vital presentation of thought.

In either case, we have textbooks in use and teachers in service in which and by whom pupils are taught with fatal insistence that a composition—which should mean any piece of writing intended to serve a worth-while purpose—consists of “an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.”

For ease of teaching I wish it were true. But it is not. It falls so far short of being the truth that it often is an indefensible untruth.

Modern writing outside of academic walls has largely dropped the introduction. It has dropped the introduction because it does not need it. For the same reason, it has largely dropped the conclusion.

Our generation is a generation of skilled writers. But it is not a generation addicted to introductions and conclusions. The teacher who hammers away on the introduction-body-conclusion method shows that he is not familiar with the writings of his own day, or else that he is not capable of learning new things. He is like the farmers who, in this era of scientific cultivation, farm as grandpap farmed. Some of grandpap's methods have not been improved upon yet, and some of them ruined the soil they were used on.

A study of the effective writing of our own day will show how largely the introduction-conclusion plan of structure has passed away. From news report to editorial article, from descriptive or expository article to argument, from short story to essay, modern writing—which is probably the most effective the world has known—shuns the formalities of structure except when it needs them. And when it needs them, they are no longer formal divisions, but essential parts of the thought itself.

When it needs them: for like every other element of successful writing, they exist to serve an extremely definite purpose, and for nothing else. Often indeed they have no function in a particular piece of writing, and therefore, so far as that piece of writing is concerned, no excuse for being. Especially is this so of the introduction; and the conclusion more often than not is already present merely in the logical close of the article itself.

My protest therefore is not directed against introductions and conclusions in themselves, but to the teaching that makes them appear as necessary parts of every piece of writing. Every editor knows that he can waste-basket from one sheet to three sheets at the beginning of the "stuff" the tyro turns in, and lose nothing. Every instructor of college Freshmen knows the paper that consists of a long introduction and little else—the necessary number of words having been written, with a line or two of "body" and a formal "conclusion" tacked on. No small part of Freshman teaching consists in demonstrating to the students that they have not in the least outlined a paper when they have set down "Introduction-Body-Conclusion." Thought is not to be analyzed in any such mechanical way, and we do pupils a wrong in making them think that it can be.

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